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State Department review completed

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SUMMARY

GENERAL

1. India reportedly to return Korean prisoners to each side in January (page 3).

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4. Comment on Sharett's selection as Israeli premier-designate (page 4).

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GENERAL

1. India reportedly to return Korean prisoners to each side in January:

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According to Ambassador Allen, Indian officials are preparing the ground for the possible return of the Korean prisoners to the detaining sides if the political conference

does not meet by 22 January. He says this move has the purpose of relieving India of the responsibility of actually unlocking the gates and freeing the prisoners.

The Swedish ambassador in New Delhi told Allen he had heard that 24 January was being considered as the release date, perhaps to demonstrate the custodial force's token "right" to detain the prisoners beyond the deadline without incurring responsibility for holding them longer.

Comment: Previous reports have indicated that India was undecided on a course of action but was inclined to favor retaining custody of the prisoners until either the UN or a political conference had reached a decision.

The UN Command has consistently maintained that the prisoners cannot be detained by the neutral commission beyond 22 January, and the above report suggests that India is preparing to accept this terminal date. Such a move would place on the respective sides the responsibility for converting the prisoners to civilian status and for their final disposition.

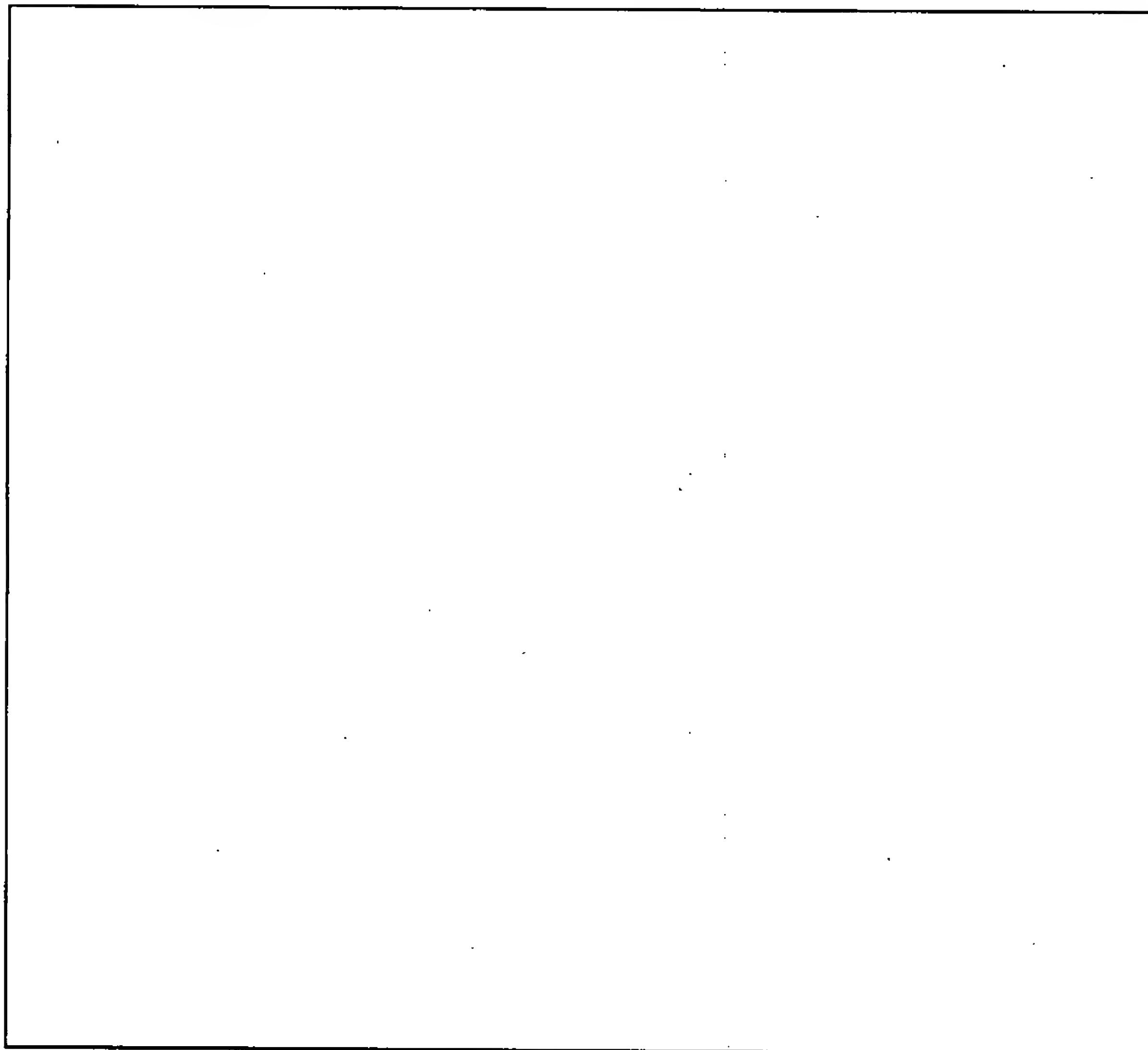
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4. Comment on Sharett's selection as Israeli premier-designate:

The selection of Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett as Israeli premier-designate by MAPAI, the dominant party, brings to the fore a more moderate man than the strong-minded Ben-Gurion, who has held office since 1948. Earlier reports had stated that a MAPAI leader favored by Ben-Gurion would be appointed.

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Sharett, who is considered pro-Western, has served continuously with the outgoing premier, but he has frequently opposed the latter's aggressive policies. He disagreed with Ben-Gurion's policy on the Jordan River diversion project [redacted]

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[redacted] Sharett may accordingly attempt to soften Israel's strong-arm policy toward the Arabs, although conciliatory gestures may arouse direct opposition from other influential leaders in Israel.

Lacking the stature of Ben-Gurion, Sharett will find his leadership severely tested when he attempts to handle Israel's complex problems. He faces an acute short-term debt problem. Within his own party he must contend with potentially strong opposition from such leaders as Pinhas Lavon, newly proposed defense minister. He must also win the backing of the country's second largest party, the General Zionists, who are already demanding a larger share in the government. [redacted]

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